



MADISON COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Feb / Mar. 2008

“ there are two types of people in the world, those that spill the soup and those that get the soup spilled on ‘em ”

08.2

Sheriff Dave Schenk working a vehicle accident last summer in the Beartrap. A reminder that summertime is coming and traffic volume will increase. Drive Carefully !!!

MCSO

“providing quality, professional customer service to the public and the five primary county service branches”

1. **Law Enforcement**
2. **Fire**
3. **EMS**
4. **Public Works**
5. **Administration and**

Did you know ???

- Madison County Communications Officers average approximately **2752** telephone interactions per month (**688 per week**) or about **33,000** phone interactions each year !
- Madison County Communications Officers average approximately **972** radio interactions per week (**3888 per month**) or approximately **46,656** radio interactions per year !

Interoperable Montana to delay new Madison County Repeater site “Big Sky’s Lone Peak gets delayed”

The Interoperable Montana Technical Committee recommended that one of three repeater sites scheduled to be installed in Madison County this coming year be deleted from the current PSIC grant funding.

The two MADCO repeater sites up for delay consideration were the Sierra Site (Ruby Mountain range area) and Lone Peak (Big Sky area).

The 3rd site (VC Pass) was not considered for delay . The VC Pass site is not a “green site” - meaning it is not being built from scratch. Currently, there is an existing FAA tower site near that location and the NEPA (environmental study) should be easier to accomplish.

The Sierra site and the Virginia City Pass site were well along in the BLM acquisition process. An unplanned amendment to these sites may have caused a project delay and apprehension for BLM administrators - due to the amount of work they have already allocated for the site land acquisition and project approval.

Additionally, a firm commitment to a Big Sky repeater site has not yet been completely agreed upon

and MADCO had no solid understanding as to location and a site use agreement.

After much discussion with the Sheriff’s Office, several technical committee members, South Central Montana Interoperability Consortium and the Communication Coordinator, the decision was made to temporarily delay the installation of the tower at Lone Peak.

Roger Smith, an IMTC committee member explained the delay request was due to a deficit in the Public Safety Communication Grant in the amount of about \$400,000. “Money had to come from somewhere and the only logical choice was one of Madison County’s spur sites”.

Roger Smith assured Madison County officials that this is a “construction delay due to a temporary funding issue” and not a complete cancellation of the Lone Peak tower project. Smith said that the tower will be next on the project list as soon as more funds become available—possibly early next year.

New Voice Recorder Installed in Dispatch

Radio and Telephone

A new Voice Recorder was recently installed in the Communications Office.

The new “Stancil Digital Recording System” was purchased from Westek Marketing -a North Bend Washington based Company. The price of the new system was just over \$12,000 and the purchase was jointly made by the Sheriff’s Office and the Communications Department.

The new “state of the art” system records both telephone conversations and radio traffic (emergency and general activity) and will be a benefit when a Communications Officer needs to replay or review a recorded conversation for vital information.

This new system replaced an aging and poor functioning system that originally cost almost \$30,000.

“There were no longer parts available for the old system and for litigation and operational purposes, the Sheriff’s Office needed to upgrade the recorder” said Sheriff Dave Schenk.

MADISON COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

December 2007 Monthly Newsletter

“Providing misguided direction to Madison County Emergency Services”

December, 2007

Christopher W. Mumme, Director

It is 2 A. M. - you are a Deputy for the Madison County Sheriffs Office – you are driving down Highway 287 when a call comes over the radio. “25-11, respond to a residential burglary alarm at 261 Antelope Acres in Virginia City Ranches, your back-up is responding from Twin Bridges”.

You have just been advised of a burglary alarm at a rural private home and caution is advised. When you arrive, the house is dark, the area is quiet, but you must investigate to see if all is normal. After a careful evaluation of the scene, you find that there is no one home - and you have to mark it up as just another “false alarm”. Another one of the 98% of electronic alarms that fall into the “false electronic alarm category”.

Unfortunately, this is the story heard over and over again. From January, 2007 through November, 2007, Madison County dispatch handled 56 alarms - and 55 of them were false. That is a 98% error rate of all alarms for this year. Out of these 55 false alarms, 30 were responded to and found the premises secure, 22 the alarms were cancelled while an officer was in route and 3 were cancelled before an officer was called out.

The LEPC, with Commissioner approval, has taken up the issue and directed me to write up an ordinance to address the false alarm problem. The ordinance has been modeled after the Bozeman City Ordinance on False alarms with a few changes and also a fine schedule for offenders:

For department response to scene where the alarm was deemed false, the fines will be as follows:

(per 12 month period – January 1st through December 31st – each year)

1st & 2nd alarm will not be fined but a written warning will be issued.

3rd alarm will be fined \$100.00.

4th alarm will be fined \$200.00 ,

Each subsequent alarm will double the fine - ie: 5th results in \$400.00 and so on until determined by Director of Public Safety that the cause of said false alarms is corrected or deemed to be a “no-response” location.

With approval from the legal department, I will present this proposed ordinance to the County Commission in the near future.

For more information the ‘proposed’ ordinance, please contact me for a copy or email me for an attachment.



Communications Dept. — what are we up to ???

The Communications Department is charged with many aspects of communications related activities. Some of the immediate items we are currently working on include:

The establishment of a 7 person E-911 committee as recommended by the state Public Safety Service Bureau (PSSB).

Sustain the momentum and the work with South Central Montana Interoperability Consortium (SCMIC) and Interoperability Montana (IM) program.

Implement a new Point to Point (Microwave PTP) enhanced and reliable communication

connection with the VC Hill repeater and the courthouse.

Investigate the purchase options of a new voice recording system in the Sheriff's Office (Stancil vs NICE vs others?).

Develop an updated and modern Policy and Procedure manual specifically designed for the Dispatch / Communications department-relative to operational direction and litigation considerations for the department, the county, the individual Communications officers and their responsibilities.

A monthly newsletter to keep Comm Officers and fellow

county departments and employees informed and aware.

Communications Center business cards so Comm Officers have a professional means to issue Sheriff's / Communications Center information upon requests by walk up customers.

Evaluate the purchase of television news and Weather coverage options in the Primary EOC / dispatch center.

Re-evaluation of county EMS and Fire dispatch response protocols for local fire and EMS agencies.

Initiate 911 recall notification system / training by 11/07.

Communications Officers make the difference

I am constantly impressed with the caliber and ability of our Madison County Communications Officers.

Their professionalism and service capacity - while being tasked with the single handed responsibility of all aspects of county communications - are very impressive indeed.

Our Communications center supplies communications and dispatch service for 7 different fire departments, 4 QRU agencies, 2 large ambulance districts, 5 Law Enforcement agencies including: the Madison County Sheriff's Office, the Ennis Police department, local Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks officers, BLM Federal Officers and local Montana Highway Patrol officers.

Additionally, our Comm Officers also interact and monitor

radio communications with road crews, school buses / districts, various county administrative employees, DES and 4 other surrounding counties.

The Communications Center is headed by lifelong county resident and Communications Supervisor Janet Fortner—with 34 years experience in the Sheriff's office dispatch center.

Janet was instrumental in bringing Madison County into “Full Compliance” during our last state audit in 2005. Very few county agencies across the state obtain a “full compliance” rating - and the hard work and attention to detail are a credit to Janet's dedicated service.

Additional full time Communication Officers include Vicki Selvidge with 28 years service, Casey Baril - nearly 20 years of service and Heather Woirhaye

with 9 years of service to the department. These four individuals alone bring a combined total of 91+ years of experience and service to our center.

Part time employees include: Junie Miles with 1 year part time experience, Tommy Lukshaw who is currently completing training and started July 24th of this year. Additionally, Steve DiGiovanna and Detention Officer Carmin Hill fill in as Comm Officers on an “as needed / when possible” basis.

All of our full and part time communication officers have graduated from the Montana State Communication Officer Academy in Helena - and have been certified by the State of Montana as PSAP Communication Officers. This, in addition to the 6 week “in house” training process with Comm Supervisor Janet Fortner.

Is our BUZZ finally gone?

That low buzz / hiss “open mic” problem coming across the local radio frequency this past few months may finally be gone for good - thank you very much!

Apparently, the Upper Ruby Repeater was struck by lightning and damaged sometime in July during one of our frequent summer electrical storms.

This caused a situation where the repeater transmitter locked open and wreaked havoc with our local radio channels and direct radio communication operations.

“We even got complaints from citizens who said they could no longer listen to their scanners because of the constant radio noise” according to one county communications officer.

Essentially, the radio repeater appeared to be in constant transmit mode - according to Jeff Tong of Bridger Communication Services.

After many weeks of hunting the cause of the transmission - including the activation of signal hunting aircraft, the culprit was identified.

“What threw us off was that we de-activated the Upper Ruby Repeater several times electronically - and the signal persisted. This caused us to look at other transmission sources - not realizing the repeater de-activate function was not working as well” according to Jeff Tong. “We wasted a lot of time looking in the wrong direction—and we learned a big lesson” Tong said.